

Greta Pennington of the Ramblers' Association takes a walk into history in a remote part of north west Herefordshire. Starting from the village of Lingen, the route takes in some fine old buildings, ancient woodland and panoramic views of wooded hills

Start/Parking: Lingen Church OS 366672.
Maps: OS Explorer Map 201.
Distance: 4 miles.
Grade: Moderate.
Stiles: 13
Nearest Town: Presteigne or Kington.
Refreshments: Royal George tel 01544 267322 (Lunch Friday to Sunday. Evening Tuesday to Saturday).
Public Toilets: None.
Public Transport: None.

Lingen, which is mentioned in the Domesday Book, has been occupied since at least the Middle Ages. It is situated on the Lime Brook, a tributary of the river Lugg; and its name, which suggests a Celtic origin, means 'place of sparkling water'. The village has some handsome timber-framed houses, many of which are listed.

To the west of the church, just by the car park, there is a row of timber framed cottages, The Forge, Mortimer Cottage, The Cottage and Tudor Cottage. They date from the mid 17th century, although the central part of Mortimer Cottage was probably built in the 1590s. They were yeomen's cottages and they would originally have been thatched. According to village lore they served as a school before a replacement was built to the west of this row in 1870. It is now a private house.

1 After leaving your car in the small car park to the west of the church, walk through the churchyard, which has mature chestnut and yew trees around it.

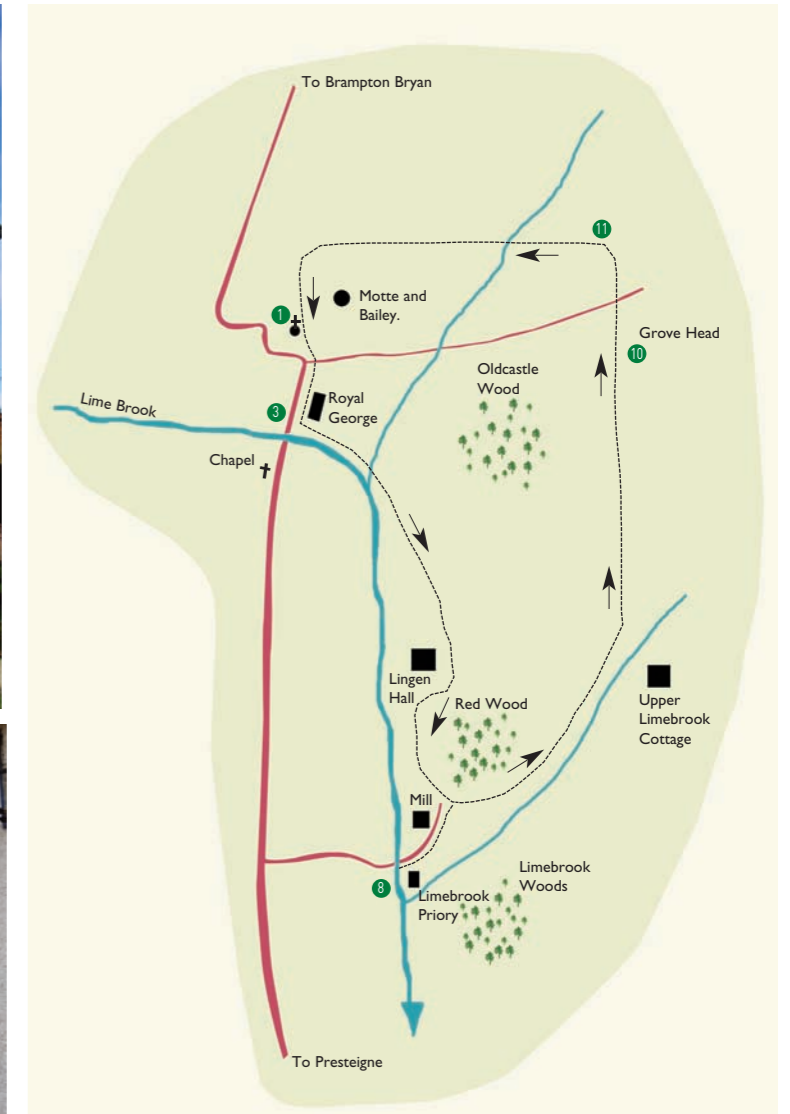
St Michael and All Angels Church is built of stone and dates back to the 13th century, although it was substantially repaired in the 19th century. The stone for doing this came from the Harley Estate at Brampton Bryan. The cost for rebuilding was £1500! The stone tower dates from the 16th century.

2 From the porch walk down to the lychgate, onto the road, turn left and walk round the bend following the main road. Court House stands on the corner where the minor road leads up to Deerfold. The west wing was built in the 16th century. Ahead on the left is The Royal George pub, dating from 1723. Walk down this main road into the rest of the village

3 Just beyond the pub, you will see a waymark, indicating a path on the left by the side of the Rose and Ivy cottages. Before taking this path, walk a few yards further to see the Methodist Chapel that is still in use. When it was opened in



Lingen



Above left to right: Harleys Mountain. Methodist chapel. Lime Brook. Eastwood House. View looking towards Deerfold. The Royal George. Bottom right: Lingen Church.

June 1877, 400 people attended the ceremony followed by tea. Beside the chapel, there was once another public house, the Rose and Crown. This is now a private home, Eastwood House.

4 Returning to the Rose and Ivy cottages, go through the gate into the field and follow the path alongside the fence that slants gently right to cross the Lime Brook on a stone bridge. With the stream now on the left, walk through the trees, cross the stile and walk left to the wooden bridge that has a stile at each end. Almost immediately cross the next bridge that also has a stile at each end.

5 The track now leads off to the right, through the woods and contours round at the base of Oldcastle Wood. It is said that there are indications of Iron Age farmsteads in these woods. With the trees rising up the hillside you are very aware of following an ancient route.

The trees are very tall, and in places they form avenues as the track rises round the back of Lingen Hall. This was built in the mid 1800s for the Gisborne family who played a prominent part in village affairs until the 1930s. It was built in the Georgian style and internally incorporated many features from that period. In the Second World War Effingham House school was evacuated here and remained for the duration.

6 Having skirted the back of the building and garden you

now go downhill for a short distance. At the bottom of this slope, turn sharp right to go down through the woods to the riverside.

These are ancient woodlands with examples of old oak coppice and mature yew trees. Some of the fields are unimproved and contain a variety of flora, including wild daffodils and orchids. Looking back you can glimpse Lingen Hall through the trees.

A particular plant associated with this area is the asarabacca. It is not native to the British Isles and it is thought to have been introduced either by monks who were housed in Lingen while Wigmore Abbey was being built, or by the nuns at Limebrook Priory. All parts of the plant are poisonous; it was used in Ancient Greece to treat kidney complaints and in wine making. It was also used as an emetic and a purgative. It grows freely in the gardens in Lingen.

7 As the path contours round the base of Red Wood, you can see the river and hear it gurgling below you on the right. You walk up a gentle slope to a gate. Turn right to go down through a small patch of field onto the lane in front of Limebrook Mill. This is one of six mills recorded in the area, used for milling corn and fulling. This mill dates from the 13th century. It was extended in the 17th century and was last worked in 1936. The garden is full of interest and colour. ▶



STILES

Stiles are not particularly walker-friendly, and certainly make life difficult for dog-walkers and anyone with mobility difficulties. Herefordshire Council now has a policy to encourage the replacement of stiles with gates. It will provide new gates to replace stiles free of charge to landowners but will charge for replacement stiles. Ring 01432 260572 for details.

HEREFORDSHIRE WALK



Above left to right:
View from the path
below Upper
Woodbatch farm.
Limebrook. The Forge.

8 Walk along the lane for about a quarter of a mile to a T-junction. Go left for about 30 yards and in the field on the left you can see what remains of Limebrook Priory. This was a 13th century nunnery that was founded either by Ralph de Lingen or one of the Mortimers. By 1516 six Augustinian nuns lived here and remained until the Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. Now there are few traces, apart from the grass-covered mounds and the remains of a doorway. And of course, sheep! These animals have provided an income for the inhabitants of this area for centuries.

9 Retrace your route to Limebrook Mill and continue up the lane to the gate, where it turns to the right up to Upper Limebrook Cottage. Over to the left there is a path that crosses a narrow wooden bridge. Go through the gate and walk up the field following the course of the stream that now lies to the right. At the top of the field, go through the gate and follow the lane that now winds uphill, through woodland, to the minor road at Grove Head.

In 1874 pottery spoil was investigated just below here. In 1929 a much more thorough search discovered quantities of mainly unglazed domestic ware, and several kilns.

10 As you cross the road, look down hill to the left, to where the village nestles below the hills around it. Having reached the lane opposite, go through the gate, follow the track left and downward, then contour round below the bracken-covered slopes on the right, until you see a small conical hill on the right and tucked into the hedge on the left, a stile.

Throughout this section you have views across to Hartley Mountain on the left, up to Deerfold on the right, and ahead to the hills above Brampton Bryan.

11 Cross the stile (ref. OS 375679) to walk straight down

through the bushes and trees to the next stile. Slant left, down to near the bottom of the field, cross the wooden bridge with a stile at each end and then cut across the corner of the field to an indentation in the hedge where you will find a stile and then another bridge, again with two stiles. You are now crossing a tributary of the Lime Brook.

12 Slant left over the field to the gate and just beyond this, along the hedge cross another stile and walk over the field towards the church. There is yet another double stile wooden bridge but you will be relieved to know that you can bypass this.

13 With the church tower now in view you will also see many traces of the castle and village that once stood here. Although now grass-covered mounds, you will see that this field has been much disturbed. It has not been excavated but there is evidence of a motte and bailey castle and of a curtain wall round the bailey.

14 Climb the three shallow steps to the gate into the churchyard and return to your car. ■

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

The Ramblers' Association is the UK's largest walking charity. It promotes walking in the countryside, improves access to it, and protects the beauty of the countryside. In the UK the RA has over 130,000 members organised in 54 areas and 450 local groups. In the Herefordshire area we have four groups: Hereford, Ross, Mortimer and Leadon Vale. We run a combined walks programme with about four walks every week. All are very welcome on our walks.

For more information about Herefordshire Ramblers ring Tom Fisher on tel: 01886 821544 or email tom.fisher@virgin.net